

*The Advantages of the Jews under their
Dispensation set forth, and the use
they made of them considered.*

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T W O

SERMONS

Preached before the

UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,

At St. MARY's,

On Sunday, April 27th, and Sunday, May 4th,
1760.

By GILBERT SWANNE, D.D.
Fellow of Magdalen College.

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O X F O R D,

At the CLARENDON Printing House. 1760.

Sold by Daniel Prince; and John Rivington in
St. Paul's Church-Yard, London.

The Advantages of the Jews under their
Dispensation for Jews, and the use
they made of them considered.

T W O

S E R M O N S

Imprimatur,

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Vice-Can. Oxon.

Sept. 25. 1760.

On Sunday April 25th and Sunday May 4th,
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By GILBERT SWANN, D.D.
Fellow of Magdalen College.

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ROMANS III. I.

What advantage then hath the Jew?—

WHEN the Christian Religion first made its appearance in the world, there was nothing gave it a more visible, as well as a more amiable distinction, than its peaceable disposition; and that peculiar harmony, and affectionate agreement which prevailed amongst its early converts. Nevertheless, as it was not to be expected that all their past errors should be immediately corrected and removed, some difficulties at the first could not well fail of occurring to them, and of producing some disputes amongst them. Accordingly, we find it to have been a question warmly debated in the Apostle's days, whether the ritual law of *Moses* should be superseded by the coming in of a new and better dispensation. The *Jews* of that time who had been converted to Christianity, could not, it seems, at once fore-

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go all the prejudices of their former education; but were still tenacious of those ceremonies to which they had been long accustomed, and which they knew to have been originally of divine appointment. Nor were they contented with this, but desirous of loading even the Gentile converts with the yoke which they had received from their fathers, tho' it was such as *neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.*^a

IN opposition to these mistaken apprehensions of his countrymen, our Apostle in several parts of his writings enters upon this controversy, always deciding it in favour of the Gentile converts, and constantly confirming to them the liberty *wherewith Christ had made them free.*^b But from his enlarging so particularly on this topick to the Christians at Rome, it is probable enough he had discovered them to have been not unsusceptible of the same prejudices. Some of the Gentile converts may easily be supposed to have entertained a very high reverence for the *Jewish* nation; and considering them as the chosen people of God, *and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ himself came,*^c might be inclined to pay an

^a Acts 15. 10. ^b Galat. 5. 1. ^c Rom. 9. 5.

undue deference to their opinion and directions. It became necessary therefore for the Apostle to furnish these new converts with a full and accurate confutation of this mistake; tho' at the same time he has endeavoured to do it in such a manner, as to avoid the giving offence to those of his *own nation*. It was for *their* effectual conversion, he was, *if it were possible*, more abundantly sollicitous. He acknowledges, and even glories in, his relation to them, as far as he could think *any glorying* allowable. He enumerates, in another part of his Epistle, the many and great privileges their birthright had intitled them to. And, as a yet further proof of his regard for them, he offers some sort of apology for their weakness; allowing, that since all those privileges are either transferred to, or superseded by the Gospel in which the Gentiles are admitted to an equal share with the *Jews*, it is natural for the latter of these to ask, — *What advantage then hath the Jew?* —

THIS is the connexion of the words: but I shall beg leave to treat of them as an independent question, without their reference to a controversy that has long since ceased; and enquire,

WHAT advantages the *Jews* enjoyed above the Gentiles, under their dispensation, considered either in itself, or as an introduction to the Gospel.

AFTER which, I shall proceed to a further subject of enquiry; namely, What improvements this people are either known, or justly supposed, to have made under such extraordinary means.

IN the first place then, to begin with that most obvious advantage, and with which the sacred writings themselves begin; their being made acquainted with the creative power and goodness of God, and with the primitive and present state of mankind. The *Jews* must in this respect be allowed to have enjoyed a most signal advantage not only above the Gentile world in general, but above the best and wisest of their Philosophers. They indeed plainly enough perceived that the world was overspread with wickedness, and that the manners of most people were such as even their own unimproved reason could not but condemn; yet all this while, they knew not that it was a state of degeneracy. Unassisted reason found itself perplexed with inextricable difficulties,

culties, whenever it attempted to account for the origin of Evil ; so that some of them had recourse to the absurd hypothesis of two independent Principles, the one good and the other evil. — But the *Jews* were possessed of an authentic history, from whence they were assured of the perfection and innocence in which our first parents were created ; and in which there was a clear and distinct account of the manner and circumstances of their fall, and of the fatal effects it had on themselves and all their descendants.

THE earliest instructors of mankind in the heathen world, appear not to have been utterly unacquainted with the nature of the Supreme Being, and their own relation towards him. But when, in directing people to a knowledge of their Creator, fancy had once presumed to hold out her own glimmering and delusive light ; even those traces of primæval and original tradition came in time to be esteemed the work of fancy only. And when wisdom began to consist rather in the exercise of human invention, than in preserving every sacred Truth, and keeping it free from any such adulterations ; the benefit of every revealed point of knowledge was soon lost,

lost, and the world in general sunk into a total ignorance of its own original.

IN vain did the Gentile philosophers in succeeding times endeavour with all their diligence and sagacity to supply this defect: Truth, notwithstanding the uncommon eagerness of the pursuit, still eluded all their attempts. As if it were providentially intended, more particularly in these researches, to mock the presumption of Man, to mortify that pride and vanity of heart, which had occasioned his first disobedience, and led the way to that catastrophe the sacred Historian hath related.

MERE human reason is indeed, in the nature of things, incapable of arriving at any such knowledge; but on this subject it seems to have exerted itself in a manner vastly inferior to its other efforts. So that the philosophers of those times, endeavouring to establish various systems of their own, do in reality yield a tacit kind of testimony to the *Mosaic* history; whilst they discover the weakened faculties of the human mind, and that degenerate state to which it was reduced by the fall.

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It appears then, that the several nations of the world were not more upon an equality with each other, in deriving their original descent from the same common Parent; than the *Jews* were distinguished from all the rest of them, by this signal favour of a genuine uncorrupted history of such their primitive state. And as to the disputes that have been raised concerning the literal sense of that account, they cannot in any degree affect the certainty of that knowledge which is derived from it. Whether we understand it in the literal sense or not, the fall of man, and the doctrine thence arising will be equally clear and perspicuous; for in every sense, it will be evident from the *Mosaic* account, that *by one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by sin.*^a

It is needless to observe of how great importance the knowledge of this circumstance must have been, wherever it came; how much it must contribute to raise in the minds of men an awful regard to the Supreme Being, the Creator and Governor of the world; and what powerful motives it must suggest of future obedience to him; and consequently how

^a Rom. 5. 12.

great

great a superiority in this particular the *Jews* enjoyed above all other nations, amongst whom the tradition of the fall was much obscured by fable, or wholly obliterated by length of time.

ANOTHER advantage men were possessed of under the *Jewish* dispensation, consisted in the knowlege of the true God : which, however manifested in his works so far as to leave the Gentile world without excuse, yet in fact was *preserved* amongst the children of *Israel*, whilst it was in a great measure lost among all other nations. — Idolatry indeed began so early in the world, that it is not easy to trace out either the original or progress of it, with any exactness. But we are certain that it prevailed in *Egypt*, at the time when God brought forth from thence his chosen People, when he displayed his Power and Majesty against all the gods of *Egypt*. For *Moses* expressly affirms, that on this account the children of *Israel* could not without hazard of their lives, sacrifice to their God in the land as *Pharaoh* desired them : *Lo shall we, saith he, sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians, the creature which they hold sacred, to which they pay divine honours, before their Eyes,*
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and will they not stone us? ^a Here then, idolatry had already fixed her seat. From hence, together with the rudiments of Art and Science, the repute of which served but to recommend their religious errors; it made its progress into *Greece*, and afterwards overspread the whole *Roman Empire*. So that in the Apostle's days, the Gentile world in general had *changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man*; ^b and some of them payed their absurd devotions even to the lowest parts of his creation. — But the very foundation of the *Jewish* religion was laid in the knowlege and worship of the true God: the preservation of this knowlege was one important end for which it was instituted. Whenever this People fell off to the worship of any strange gods, the very terms of their adoption and covenant were broken: they became guilty not only of Impiety, but Unfaithfulness; of an act of rebellion against the Lord of Hosts, who had condescended to be their King, the supreme Governor of their State. The severest judgements were threatened, and executed upon them, for this crime; nor were any human ties whatsoever allowed to in-

^a Exod. 8. 26.^b Rom. 1. 23.

terpose in favour of such offenders : even their nearest relations were commanded to stone them. These means of divine appointment at length effectually cured them, of that inclination to idolatry, which they had discovered on several occasions. So that in our Saviour's time, among all their other corruptions, we do not find them once charged with this.

A FURTHER advantage the *Jews* had in this respect was, that they were not only preserved in the knowlege of the true God, under their dispensation ; but they were likewise better instructed by it, in his Nature and Perfections, than any other Nation whatsoever. The least acquaintance with antiquity will discover what gross conceptions the Gentiles entertained of the Deities they worshipped. Even the better sort of those Deities had such characters assigned them, as could have no good effect on the manners of those who were devoted to their service. In general, they were supposed to have, not only the weakness, but the depravity of human nature ; so that, far from being the proper objects of worship, they are represented as by no means worthy of imitation, and that even by writers of the most elevated genius in those times.

BUT

BUT the God of the *Hebrews* is always described in a manner suitable to the nature and perfections of an infinite Being; who *in the beginning created the heavens and the earth: who spake the word, and they were made; who commanded, and they were created.* The great *Jewish* Lawgiver, in the bare representation of these things, necessarily reached the true sublime; and could not but appear to have excelled in the greatness of his conceptions and in dignity of expression, as much as he did in the wisdom of his laws and government.

THE infinite Majesty and Power of our Creator, is in various parts of the Holy Scriptures, represented to us under images as great and lofty as human language is capable of conveying. *He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing; he hath compassed the waters with bounds, and shut up the sea with doors.* ^a — *The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary.* ^b *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the*

^a Job. passim.

^b Isaiah 40. 28.

dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?^a

ALL nature, at first created by his Word, is represented as obedient to it, and standing in awe of his displeasure. *The waters see him and are afraid, the depths also are troubled;*^b if he is angry, the rocks melt before him, the foundations of the hills shake, the pillars of heaven tremble.

NOR did the sacred Writings furnish the Jews with less perfect notions of his Wisdom, than of his Power and Majesty. The Deities of other nations are described to them, such as indeed they were, *even the work of mens hands; they have mouths and speak not, eyes have they and see not; they have ears, and hear not.*^c — But the God of Israel is represented not only as infinitely perfect in himself, but the Author of every degree of perfection which is observable in his creatures. *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men. — For he that planted the ear shall he not hear? or he that made the eye shall he not see?*^d *or he that teacheth man*

^a Isai. 40. 12. ^b Ps. 77. 16. ^c Ps. 15. 4. ^d Ps. 94. 9.

knowledge? — *Who hath shewed to him the way of understanding?* But above all, his Holiness and Purity, his abhorrence of sin and regard for virtue, are represented in such a manner; as will not permit us to bestow the name of holiness on any other being or thing whatsoever, but for the relation it bears to him, or for some comparative degree of excellence derived from him. *He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and him that delighteth in wickedness doth his soul abhor. Behold, he chargeth even his angels with folly; yea, the very heavens are not clean in his sight.*^a

YET was not the mercy of God to frail mortals imperfectly aspiring to some resemblance of that Holiness, forgotten under the *Jewish* dispensation; but they who endeavoured to render themselves the proper objects of it, were assured that *the Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.*^b At the publication of this Covenant, he is represented as descending upon *Mount Sinai* in a cloud, standing by their great Law-giver, and thus *proclaiming his Name or Nature*, — *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful*

a Job 15. 15.

b Psal. 25. 14.

and

and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."

SUCH is the God of the *Hebrews* described to be: and of his being such they were continually supplied with sensible and actual proof; and were from their own experience likewise, better instructed in the ways of his Providence, than any other nation. They lived indeed under a Theocracy for a long time, and an extraordinary Providence watched over them. But it cannot be affirmed, with any degree of probability, that this Providence was exercised towards them in so discriminating a manner, as to render to every individual in exact proportion to his deserts. The nature of things would not admit of this, in the present life; where good and bad men live promiscuously together in the same Society, and must therefore partake of the same common blessings and calamities. But in another sense, they certainly lived under an Equal Providence; for the temporal promises and threatnings of God, which concerned them as a people, were always dispensed

a Exod. 34. 7.

to them with an equal hand, and in proportion to their national merits.

AND if in this sense every other nation round them was also governed with an equal providence ; yet the superior advantage of the *Jews* was very conspicuous, in as much as, while other nations were left to find out of themselves the reasons of the calamities that befel them ; the sacred Writings were filled with plain declarations of the rewards and punishments that would await the *Jews*, for the observance or neglect of their duty. Nor was this all — For if in particular instances the dispensations of Providence seemed ever to vary from this equal rule ; the people of God were blessed with this further instance of preeminence, that whilst the mere Philosopher was puzzled and perplexed at the sight of virtue in distress, and of vice exulting in its pleasures with impunity ; the sincere *Israelite* was taught that a small thing which the righteous hath, is better than great riches of the ungodly : far from being disturbed or *envious at the evil doer*, he could go into the sanctuary of his God, and there understand the end of these men. His own Scriptures would discover to him the slippery foundation

dation of all their boasted eminence ; and *how suddenly they consume, perish, and come to a fearful end.*

LASTLY, these instructions might very properly lead them to a firmer expectation of another life, and to an higher idea of the nature of it, than the Gentiles could possibly acquire ; at least, they could not fail of giving a compleat assurance to any such notices thereof, as they had already received. It must be acknowledged indeed, that if we search the Pentateuch with our utmost care, it will not appear that the doctrine of a future state made any part of the *Mosaic* Law : and perhaps this might be the reason, why the Sadducees were ready enough to admit the divine authority of these Books ; while they paid little or no regard to the other parts of the Holy Scriptures. This omission, and on what principle it may be accounted for, shall be considered in its proper place. In the mean time it may be sufficient to observe, that had the *Jews* been left, as other people were, to tradition and the exercise of their own reason on this point ; such traditional knowledge would have been better preserved by them, than any other people ; in as much

much as the more refined notions which they had of God and of his Attributes, would have still further confirmed them in the belief of a tradition so agreeable to the Divine Nature and Perfections. All the difficulties of such a supposition, with which an alien from the commonwealth of *Israel* might have been perplexed, being easily removed by their reflecting on that infinite Knowledge which nothing can escape, and that Power which nothing can resist or exceed.

BUT indeed we are sufficiently assured that *Abraham* looked for a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God; and that this friend of God, and others with him, confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and desired a better country, that is an heavenly.^a We are likewise assured, that the inspired Author of their history had respect unto this recompence of the reward.^b And if the generality of the *Jews* perceived not any such doctrine to be included in that declaration of God — that he was the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*; it was because they had ceased to walk in the steps of the faith of *Abraham*.

^a Hebr. 11. 16.

^b Ibid. 26.

These who were as ready to imitate, as to *boast* of him, could not but triumph in the reflection, that *This God was their God for ever and ever*; that in Their pilgrimage he would be their *guide unto death with his counsel, and after that receive them with glory.*

AND as the *Jews* had better notices of a future state; so were they better instructed in those means, which both the former and latter Revelations of God have assured us, are the most effectual means of preparing for it. They had in the Decalogue itself, considering the authority with which it was delivered to them, a more valuable scheme of Morals, than is to be found in the most celebrated writings of the ablest Philosophers. Besides which, they had various laws of this kind, extending to all cases and exigencies; and by which, they were all of them taught to regulate their behaviour in those relative duties their several stations required.

THESE are some of those advantages which distinguished the *Jewish* dispensation, considered in itself: I proceed now, 2dly, to consider it as an introduction to a better.

AND

AND here, every instance of religious Knowledge we have already observed this People to enjoy above others, received an additional value from its natural tendency to fit and prepare their minds for the reception of the Gospel. Our first parents had no sooner lost their innocence and happiness, than their affliction under that loss was alleviated, and their hope supported with a promise, that the *Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*;^a and this promise was renewed in a particular manner to *Abraham*, who saw our Saviour's *Day*, and rejoiced to see it. But there is room enough to believe that the descendants of *Abraham*, in a short time afterward, were far from being free from the corruptions of *Egypt*. In order more effectually to restrain Them from these and other manifold transgressions, the *Law* was thought proper to be *added*. And the thing principally intended in this addition, was to give new life and energy to that *Promise made unto the Fathers*, by exhibiting to their Descendants, under the most sensible and expressive images, the infinite benefits included in it. *Christ* therefore, was evidently, the *end of the Law*, which had a *shadow of good things to come*, and consisted in types and figurative

a Gen. 3. 15.

gurative representations of that more perfect Oeconomy, which was to succeed it.

THUS *Moses* himself prefigured to them, in more respects than one, that diviner Person, who should come after him, and deliver the whole world from a more than *Egyptian* bondage. Nor were they left to find out this similitude of themselves, but their own Lawgiver expressly points it out to them — *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.*^a Now there arose no Prophet amongst them, that could be at all compared to *Moses*, in his principal character as a Lawgiver, except *Jesus of Nazareth*, by whom a new Law proceeded out of *Zion*.

MOSES is also called the *Mediator* of that *Covenant* which was ordained by *Angels*; and therefore in this, as well as in many other respects, was the proper Representative of him, who was to be the *Mediator* of a better *Covenant*. Their High-priest, who was taken from among men, and ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin, was intended to re-

^a Deut. 18. 15.

present that merciful and faithful High-priest who should be *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*; and who should likewise make *reconciliation for the sins of the people*. Their tabernacle also served for an *example and shadow of heavenly things*, and was, in the Apostle's language, *a figure for the time then present, with its ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation.*^a Who can reflect on their great day of Expiation, when the high Priest alone entered into the Holy of Holies *not without blood, which he offered for the errors of the people*; and not consider it as preparative to the acknowledgement of the great *High priest of our profession*, who was one day to make an universal atonement with his own Blood for the sins of every sincere penitent; and was then to enter, *not into the holy places made with hands, which were the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us.*^c This One great Offering, being to be made, as the same Apostle expresses it, *once for all*: the prefiguration of it was therefore repeated once only, every year; whilst there was a daily course of various other services, all which were introductory to the *Christian Co-*

^a Hebr. 9. 10.^b Ibid. 7.^c *ibid.* 21.

venant,

venant, and expressive of its benefits. But indeed it would be endless to enumerate, and to explain at the same time, every circumstance in the *Jewish* dispensation, that had a reference to the *Christian*. — It will be sufficient to observe that the purpose and design of all the various Sacrifices enjoined them; was to lead them to a sense of the demerit of sin, of their own incapacity to avert the vengeance due to it, and of that mercy of God which inclined him to accept of some atonement. A course of discipline and instruction, which, if they had properly attended to it, must have disposed and prepared their minds for a sight of that mystery, of *which their own Prophets had enquired and searched diligently,*^a and *which the angels desire to look into.*^b

SUCH were the advantages which the *Jews* enjoyed beyond other people, under this dispensation, whether considered in itself, or as an introduction to the Gospel. And from this imperfect view of them, it may sufficiently appear, that they were all along distinguished from the rest of the World, in a manner very much resembling the difference once

^a 1 Pet. 1. 10.

^b Ibid. 12.

made between them and the *Egyptians* : when a *thick darkness* was over the land of *Egypt*, but all the children of *Israel* had light in their dwellings. ^a

THE *Jews* were very sensible of their superiority in these respects, and greatly valued themselves on the peculiar marks of the Divine Favour : and yet it cannot be affirmed, that the whole body of the people in our Saviour's time, were in a disposition to receive him. The contrary is too evident to admit of any dispute. But yet we cannot from hence infer any thing to the disadvantage of those means, that were made use of by Providence, to prepare the way for his reception. For with respect to the Ceremonial part of their Law ; it was a manner of teaching perfectly agreeable to that, which generally prevailed in the Eastern countries, where instructions of every sort were usually conveyed by fable, and expressed by emblem. So that, as they were taught even on common occasions to look beyond the mere surface of external objects ; that they should not do so in the appointments of a Spiritual Being, must argue a strange degree of insensibility, and such as cannot well be

^a Exod. 10. 23.

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^a Exod. 10. 23.

conceived of the more understanding part of them. And in fact, about the time of our Saviour's coming, we find *Zacharias, Simeon,* and other pious and sincere *Israelites*, waiting for the *consolation of Israel*, and speaking of the blessed Author of that *consolation, to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*^a We find also, — by that time, they had not only acquired a steadfast adherence to the true God, and were in no danger of revolting from his Service, but had greatly enlarged their notions of his providential Goodness. The doctrine of a future state, manifestly appears to have been commonly received among Them; whilst many of the more learned in the Heathen world derided it, and even those few, who employed all their learning and philosophy in a serious pursuit of it, yet collected little else but doubt and perplexity from their own unassisted meditations on that subject.

THE Heathens in short, having been once misled, the longer they continued their idolatry, did but add to its original corruption. Whereas the fountain of Divine Truth, tho' frequently defiled by a mixture of those abominations, yet cleared itself by degrees of each

^a Luke 2. 38.

gross Impurity ; while it reflected to every more discerning eye, a proper *image of the heavenly things, according to the pattern shewed to Moses in the mount.*^a

BUT how far the generality of that Nation, in earlier times, attended to these several methods of instruction, with a proper disposition of mind, and with any real and valuable improvement, demands a distinct consideration ; which will naturally lead me to some reflections on the Wisdom of God, in his moral government. A task which the presumptuous cavils of infidelity are perpetually imposing on us, and which we need not restrain our selves from engaging in ; while we keep our reason under the direction of the revealed Will of God, ever remembering that *tho' clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his seat.*^b

^a Heb. 8. 5.

^b Ps. 97. 2.

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SER-



S E R M O N II.

ROMANS III. I.

What advantage then hath the Jew?—

THERE is no clearer proof of the unbounded Goodness and Love of God to Mankind, than his recalling them to his service, and instructing them in the knowledge of their Duty, when they had forfeited his favour, and were indeed become incapable of discovering with certainty the means of regaining it. And tho' the moral duties, which have ever been most acceptable to God, are both reasonable in themselves, and beneficial to the observers of them; yet, not leaving the frailty of human nature to the influence of that consideration only, he hath taught us *to look unto Him* for the reward, as well as the direction, of our conduct. But our ideas of his wonderful con-

descension are still farther enlarged, when we reflect upon his entering into covenant with men, and not only renewing the offer of Salvation, but engaging their attention to it by the most suitable persuasives.

THERE are two circumstances which are observed most powerfully to recommend any favour to our grateful acceptance and regard: namely, a long experience of the want of that favour; and a pleasing consciousness that we are peculiarly distinguished by the grant of it to ourselves. Whilst the Heathen world was prepared for the thankful reception of a Divine Revelation by the former of these motives; the *Jewish* nation ought by the latter, to have been induced not only to set an higher value upon, but to have made a proportionable improvement under, the privileges they enjoyed,

WHAT those privileges were, I have already endeavoured to explain; and briefly pointed out the effects they were found in time to produce. I now proceed, as I proposed, to a more particular enquiry:

I. Whe-

- I. Whether the *Jews*, in earlier times, made a proper improvement under the extraordinary means, which God was pleased to afford them for that purpose.
- II. Whether their failing of such improvement can justly be imputed to any defect in the law itself. And then,
- III. Shall endeavour to shew that the permission of this failure is consistent with the Wisdom and Providence of God.

IN reference to the first Head, it may be observed that when *Moses* was called to the government and direction of this People, he found them to have contracted a strange degree of ignorance with respect to *the God of their fathers*: in so much that they had fallen into all the idolatries of *Egypt*. This ignorance was in some measure removed, by the astonishing effects of the mighty and irresistible Hand which they saw stretched out to deliver them from that *House of Bondage*. But there still remained a propensity to their former corrupt worship, which no appeal to their reason or senses was sufficient to correct. Such was the prevalence of an habitual prejudice,
and

and of the stubbornness and obstinacy so peculiar to this People, that to bring them to a due sense of the first principles of Religion, required a long course of discipline and instruction.

MOSES was surpris'd at this degeneracy of his brethren. He supposed they would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them,^a readily and gratefully accepting so seasonable an overture. And indeed, had he pass'd over in silence the continual provocations he afterwards received from them, We should have been apt enough to have formed a more favourable opinion of their conduct. Did we consider only, what he frequently calls upon Them to reflect on, *the great and glorious things which God had done for them*; we might have reasonably supposed, that they did not fail of being affected with the same grateful sentiments in general, which they are said to have expressed on a special occasion: when they *feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.*^b And when the Tabernacle was set up, and in it the Ark of the Covenant and the Altar; we might have supposed, that under a proper sense of the fa-

^a Acts 7. 25.

^b Exod. 14. 31.

vours God had already vouchsafed them; they would have been diligently employed in qualifying themselves for the still greater mercies which they expected; more especially, by a devout attention to their ceremonial Rites and Ordinances, in which those future blessings were prefigured. We might have reasonably supposed the whole Nation would be meditating on *the Law of the Lord*, as we know his more faithful Servants actually were, *day and night*.

BUT when we find, the amazing benefits conferred upon this People were so far from procuring any suitable return of gratitude and affection, that they could not even secure their obedience and belief; and that the severe corrections they frequently underwent on this account, did not for any long time prevent a repetition of their crimes; how can we imagine them to have attended to any more gentle, or indirect method of instruction?

OUR blessed Lord, in his frequent allusions to the service of the Temple, plainly shows there was a meaning couched under the externals of the *Jewish* worship, and that the Almighty did not burthen them with useless and uninstrusive ceremonies. And doubtless,
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the more understanding and devout *Jews* collected no small improvement from them; many having a signification obvious enough to common apprehension.

BUT indeed, the greater part of the *Jewish* Nation appear, from innumerable passages in *Moses* and the Prophets, to have been in earlier times almost irrecoverably infected with idolatry; a sin that doth not merely imply an opposition to the revealed Will of God, and defeat the end of all his Institutions, but that even strikes at his Nature and Essence; destroying the very root from whence every religious Principle and every moral Virtue derive their life and support. And accordingly, the inspired Writers, who in vain attempted to dissuade this People from their abominations, constantly attribute the unsuccessfulness of every admonition to that corruption of manners which generally prevailed: *their iniquities still separated between them and their God, who hid his face from them.*

I HAVE dwelt the longer on their immoral Character, not only as a disobedience to the Laws of God doth of itself generally oc-

casion a neglect of his Worship, and is what
 the Scripture calls *denying him* ; but as its in-
 fluence in producing this effect among the
Jews was, I think, somewhat more particu-
 lar. A celebrated Writer hath observed, “ that
 “ this defection from the God of *Israel* con-
 “ sisted not in any rejection of Him or of his
 “ Law ; in as much as the *Israelites* were ever
 “ most prone to idolatry in prosperous times,
 “ and generally returned to the God of their
 “ Fathers in times of adversity. The contrary
 “ of which, he supposes, would have happen-
 “ ed, had they questioned the Truth of the
 “ Law.” ^a An observation, that may probably
 help us to discover the true origin of that
 strange inconstancy of Worship, for which the
Jews were so remarkable. The God of the
Hebrews exacted purity of heart, a com-
 mand over the passions, and an entire absti-
 nence from sin ; allowing not the most punc-
 tual observance of the Ceremonial Law to
 atone for any voluntary transgression of the
 Moral : whereas the idol Deities were not
 only supposed to excuse, but some of them to
 countenance and approve, the utmost indul-
 gence of carnal appetite. Temptations of
 this sort constantly attend on prosperity and

^a Divine Legation. Vol. 2. part 1. p. 367.

affluence ; and therefore, whensoever the *Israelites* had, at those seasons, given themselves up to an immoderate degree of sensual pleasure, their inflamed appetites naturally weakened their attachments to a God of Purity and Holiness, and swayed them back again to the service of the indulgent Idol. So that, altho' they still retained the true God in their thoughts, yet advancing from one step in impiety to another, they at length made this difference alone between Him and their fictitious Deities, that These were served with affection, and God with mere formality.

THE authority and example of their more eminent Kings and Rulers, who had occasionally enforced their commands with the severest correction, did for a while procure an almost total extinction of this divided worship. But when freed from these restraints, they soon relapsed into their former profaneness ; until they drew down upon themselves those heavier Judgements, which their Prophets had foretold as the final consequence of this absurd impiety.

IN this last circumstance we behold, at the same time, one very great and peculiar advantage

rage the *Jews* were possessed of, together with their most inexcusable neglect of it. They were forewarned by a continual succession of Prophets, not only of the Judgements their disobedience would occasion, but of the particular sins for which they would be inflicted. Yet they still persisted in their iniquities, till by the Captivity they lost those opportunities of serving God, which they had made so little use of.

THE Author already cited is so full and particular on this Topick that he hath thoroughly exhausted it, and scarce left upon the *Holy Land*, or at least upon this tract of it, so much as a *gleaning* for those who come after him. I proceed therefore to enquire,

II^{dly}. Whether this failure of Improvement among the *Jews* can justly be imputed to any defect in the Law itself.

IN the prosecution of this enquiry, I shall confine myself to the consideration of that one popular Objection to the Law of *Moses*, That it is enforced with no other sanctions than the rewards and punishments of the present life.

It hath already been acknowledged that the doctrine of a future state doth not make any part of the *Mosaic* Law ; yet we cannot from thence with certainty infer, that the *Jews* of those times were left wholly uninstructed in a doctrine of that importance.

IF the knowlege of any one Religious Truth may, without direct proof of it, be supposed to have been transmitted from the Patriarchs to their descendants, the doctrine of a future state seems to have the fairest claim to that supposition. The desire of continuing our existence is so natural, and so strongly impressed upon the human mind, that no Nation can be imagined to have lost any tradition concerning it. Accordingly we find that at least some obscure notions of a future state did actually prevail in every, even the most corrupt and idolatrous, Nation. It was still less likely such a tradition should be lost among the *Jews*, to whom it might come recommended with greater marks of authenticity. And besides, from the various instances they had seen of the unlimited Power of God, they must have been well assured of his ability to effect whatever this doctrine implied ; while the belief of the probability of such a state,

state, must have been still farther confirmed by their past experience of his infinite Goodness.

BUT in reality they were not in this matter left to tradition only: the translation of *Enoch* was a proof of it which they could not overlook. This fact, tho' not so circumstantially related as the ascent of *Elijah* in after times, was in its own nature sufficient to have engaged their attention. And accordingly *Enoch* is, by a Writer of no inconsiderable authority, said to have been made an example to all Generations.* Nor can it be denied that, in the earliest Writers of this Nation, there are various Passages, which, if not a sufficient foundation for, yet must be allowed to have a very natural reference to, this doctrine.

IT is not to be wondered at, that the doctrine of a future state makes no part of the *Mosaic* Law. For that Law was delivered to the Children of *Israel* as they were a collective Body or Nation, and therefore could not be established on the hopes and fears of another life; since Societies, considered as such, have

* Eccclus. 44. 16.

no Concern, nor even any Being, beyond the present life. And if we consider the very uncommon rewards and punishments this Nation was taught to dread, or encouraged to expect, from the peculiar favour, or provoked vengeance of the Lord their God, we may perceive a certain incongruity there would have been in subjoyning to them the retributions of a life to come: which, in their own nature, are of too much importance and dignity, to bear only a secondary and inferior part in the sanctions of any Laws.

THE consistency of this omission with the Providence and Moral Government of God is sufficiently evident, from the extraordinary methods he then made use of to supply that defect. — The means used by Providence may be of all others the most proper and best calculated for our improvement, altho', through our own default, they may fail of a proportionably good effect. His Goodness, we know; will on all occasions incline him to prefer that method of procedure, which is best suited to the present circumstances of Mankind; and what that method is, must be left to his infinite Wisdom to determine. Possibly too, the reasons, why God chose for a time to inforce his

his Laws with the sanctions of temporal rewards and punishments only, may lie not far remote from our own common apprehensions of things, and it may be not improperly accounted for in the following manner.

THE favours conferred upon the *Israelites* were so very extraordinary, and carry with them such an appearance of partiality, as at first sight might be apt to confound our notions of Divine Justice. This Attribute however, on further consideration, we perceive to be no way violated by an unequal allotment of merely temporal advantages; which are not always the certain marks of God's Favour, and might be bestowed on the *Israelites* with still more unquestionable right, when all other Nations upon Earth had actually withdrawn themselves from his Protection. It belonged indeed not so properly to the Justice, as the Wisdom of God, to dispense the rewards and punishments of this Life, in such a manner as would best answer the distant and extensive Ends of his moral Government; and the electing any one People to be the instruments of promoting those ends, if supposed to be arbitrary, doth not include in it the least idea of injustice. — Our future existence in an unalterable and
 endless

endless State, is that wherein the Divine Justice is chiefly and most eminently concerned. And as the rewards and punishments, awaiting that future State, cannot be dispensed arbitrarily, and without regard to some conditions; they must needs be dispensed on the same equal conditions to the whole race of Mankind. The Justice of God cannot here admit of any *Respect of Persons*, of any the least appearance of preference or partiality. And therefore, when, by his servant *Moses*, he treated with the *Jews* as a peculiar People, he could with no propriety introduce, or so much as hint at, a Doctrine, in which no People could be considered as Peculiar. Had the fact been otherwise, there can, I think, be little doubt of this Consequence; that the *Jews* would, in their own opinion, have excluded all other Nations from the benefit of such future hopes; supposing themselves to be, in this sense also, the peculiar People of God, and the only People whom he had destined to life and immortality: a supposition absolutely irreconcilable to all the notions we have of Divine Justice; and which was easily precluded, by leaving room to distinguish between the *Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

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MEANWHILE it must be observed that, as the Fathers of old undoubtedly looked for something more than temporal promises, their Descendants also were in length of time called upon, to raise their thoughts to the same glorious expectations. They were told, that *they who sleep in the dust shall awake, some to life, and some to everlasting contempt.*^a — That a distinction should then be made *between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.*^b But all this is perfectly consistent with the Reason already given, why this doctrine had been hitherto omitted. For by this time the Jews had warning given them of the approaching abolition of their Law, and cessation of its *Carnal Commandments.* — That their Messiah should *cause the Sacrifice and Oblation to cease:*^c and that they should *no more remember the Ark of the Covenant.*^d In the room of all which, he was to establish a new and better Covenant, and admit the Gentiles also to a participation of its blessings. That they should *come unto him from the end of the*

^a Dan. 12. 2. ^b Mal. 3. 18. ^c Dan. 9. 27. ^d Jer. 3. 16.

earth:^a and from the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same, his Name should be great among the Gentiles. Here then the *Jews* were evidently restrained from misapprehending, or partially applying, the Promises of God; since these Promises belonged to all that were near, and *to all that were afar off*: And when the universality of *Christ's* Kingdom was proclaimed, nothing could be more seasonable, than to proclaim, with it, his being the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.

IN short, the different Ages of the World seem to have required, and accordingly had, each its different course of discipline and instruction. In the state of ignorance and inattention to which men were once, by their own depravity, reduced; it was impossible to make any impresson on their minds, but by immediate application to their senses. And even after they were brought to acknowledge their dependence upon their Creator, and the subjection due to him; yet the performance of his Commands for some time could be no otherwise secured, than by the hope of present reward, or the fear of impending ven-

^a Jer. 16. 19. Mal. 1. 11.

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vengeance. As the understanding grows more enlightened, and furnished with a greater knowledge of Divine Truths, God is pleased to expect their attention to more remote consequences of his favour or displeasure. He prepares them for a purer Worship, and more perfect Obedience, which he will enforce with sanctions of a different nature. And, because the objects of their hope and fear would of course operate less powerfully, when placed at a greater distance from them; therefore the weight and importance of those objects is proportionably augmented.

THE want then of greater improvement among the *Jews* is so far from being justly imputable to any defect in the sanctions of their Law, that, in all probability, no other means of enforcing it would have produced any improvement at all: for if the distance, at which our imagination places the sanctions of the new Covenant, is observed to make them lose much of their efficacy upon mankind in general, and, in some degree, even upon the Better sort of Men; those sanctions would surely have made but little impression upon such a People as the *Jews* are represented in the earlier part of their History.

SOME Speculatists find themselves, on this occasion, much perplexed in endeavouring to settle by what measures God may hereafter proceed with Those who had no knowledge of a future state; and, again, with Those who had only a traditional knowledge thereof, and that perhaps not so carefully preserved as it might have been. Difficulties — which every one must find himself inextricably involved in, who considers not, that, in this case, the great *Jewish* Lawgiver hath left for our use a very proper admonition — *the secret things belong unto the Lord our God.*^a All we know with Certainty, and may presume to infer with Safety, seems to be this: *that Righteousness came not by the Law;*^b and therefore it was not expedient, that the proper reward of Righteousness should be promised by the Law.

BUT the Misfortune is, that in this point Believers are not perfectly agreed among themselves. It is natural for men to expect *absolute* perfection, in those Instructions which are more immediately derived from God. And when once we have assumed it as a postulate,

^a Deut. 29. 29.

^b Galat. 2. 21.

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That a People, under his peculiar care and tutelage, *ought* to be made acquainted with any particular doctrine; we fondly conclude that they *were* acquainted with it. But it may be altogether as consonant to the reverent conceptions we have of our Maker, if we take our directions in this matter from what he *hath* done, and be cautious of laying too great a stress upon any particular Part of his Administration, lest thereby we detract from the beauty and harmony expressed in the Whole of it. The nature of things cannot admit of *absolute* perfection, in any Dispensation which hath a manifest reference to Another that is to succeed it, and which makes but a part only of one extensive Plan.

THAT such was the *Jewish* Oeconomy we are all agreed; and it is chiefly in this light I must consider it, while I endeavour to shew, III^{dly}, That this failure of improvement is consistent with the Wisdom and Providence of God.

BUT I beg leave to premise this one Observation; that, in reflecting upon the ways of God, we are apt sometimes to forget, before we are aware of it, that *His ways are not as our*

our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts. Our limited and imperfect understandings are never so successfully employed, as when their attention is in a great measure confined to some One Point, and not suffered to wander to any distant Objects, until that hath been well considered. In the transaction of any business, the more diligent part of us observe this method; and we are seldom perfectly satisfied with our discharge of it, unless it be attended with some present good effect. To transfer these ideas to God, to apply this contracted mode of Thinking to the effects of his unbounded Foresight, we are sensible, must needs pervert and confound in our apprehensions the nature and order of things. But still the power of habit will sometimes insensibly prevail in our *Actions*; and it is much more likely to do so in our *Thoughts*, where its influence is less subject to Observation.

WHEN once we have disengaged ourselves from this habitual kind of Prejudice, we shall not find the least room for any dissatisfaction or surprise, at the small increase of religious knowlege the ritual Law of *Moses* may be thought to have produced: because it will by
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no means follow from thence, that this Law was given to little or no purpose. For, supposing the several Ordinances it enjoined were so imperfectly understood by the main body of the People, as to have yielded hardly any other present advantage, than what arose from the external Performance of God's Commands; were those Ordinances therefore *of none effect*? This is by no means a proper Inference; since we find the Benefits thereof were in after times exceedingly great. The ritual Law was the chief Instrument of procuring a more ready and easy Reception, and a more firm Establishment of Christianity. For, by means of this, there was little occasion to reason with the Unconverted upon the first Principle of the Christian Religion; namely, the manner of God's *reconciling himself to the world* by the acceptance of a sacrificial Atonement, and his allowing the Blood of the Innocent to avert the Punishment of the Guilty. The long and constant practice of the *Jewish* Nation had declared their assent to this Principle: and therefore the first Preachers of Christianity were from thence supplied with an Argument *ad hominem*, employed with wonderful force by the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*; and, in more private appli-

applications, so successfully directed as to procure daily and great additions to the Church. And as that spiritual Building was more easily and expeditiously raised, by having the ground, on which the Corner Stone was to be laid, so long fitted and prepared for it; so the stability thereof was, by this circumstance, not less effectually provided for. The Providence of God had secured the continuance of sacrificial Rites among the Heathens, throughout the several Ages of the world. The Gentiles therefore, when Their being *reconciled to God* was first proposed to them, could have no objection to the reasonableness of that method, by which it was to be effected. So that the Modern Infidel, who would persuade us there is so much difficulty in the notion of God's accepting a vicarious Sacrifice, demands a most uncommon deference to His Judgement, since he manifestly opposes it to the united Consent of Mankind in all Ages.

AND in like manner, altho' we should suppose the several other Typical Prefigurations of the Redeemer of Mankind to have been but imperfectly understood by the main body of the People, under the *Jewish* Oeconomy; yet there will be as little of reason as of decency

gency in asking — whether those Types are to be considered as so many “toys put into “the hands of children?” for they really were but children with respect to Religious Knowledge, but mere *babes in Christ*; and in this state of pupilage the Law was given them as their *Schoolmaster*. It argued no defect in that *Schoolmaster*, if certain rudiments were, for a while, made the sole object of the Learner's attention. The authority of his Instructor was sufficient to convince him of the utility of that preparative kind of discipline; and to render him ambitious of attaining the more substantial Knowledge, to which it was intended to conduct him.

FOR when the fullness of time was come, and the correspondence between the Types and Things typified came to be observed and examined; the several Types then yielded that very kind of Evidence which was deduced from Prophecy, and there was the same reason for assenting to what had been so long prefigured, as for assenting to what had been so long foretold.

THEY have likewise this farther use, that, while they strengthen the Evidence of the

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Christian Religion, they serve to illustrate and explain its particular Institutions, and to rectify any misapprehensions concerning them. Indeed, to trace the Mysteries of the Gospel in the Types of the Law, is so engaging a Study, that it might be wished Divines would, on that very account, lay a proper restraint upon themselves in the pursuit of it: so far at least, as not to be ready on every occasion to cry out, *Lo! here is Christ, or lo! he is there*; where neither the Holy Scriptures have directed us to look for him, nor the Discovery is such as can approve itself to the clear and well informed Understanding. To search throughout the Scriptures for one Meaning veiled under another, the interior of which sometimes cannot be brought to light, without divesting the more obvious of all its natural beauty, grace and elegance, seems to be *handling the Word of God* unskilfully, tho' I presume not to say, or to suppose, it is done *deceitfully*. Some of the Fathers little thought they were weakening the Foundations of Historical Truth, while they were *digging* under it *for these bidden Treasures*.^a In short, as it would be absurd to think of illustrating any Institution

^a Job 3. 21.

by Passages whose reference thereunto is not sufficiently clear ; so on the other hand, if we consider the Typical Prefigurations of our Lord as so many additional Prophecies concerning him, we cannot but give all due attention to those which the Scriptures themselves have ascertained, or our own Reason may indisputably apprehend.

WE, whose Lives are bounded by such narrow limits, may not perhaps readily conceive these latter Ages of the World to have been so principally concerned in what preceded them ; and that the Benefits arising from any former Dispensation should, notwithstanding its long continuance, be in so great a degree reserved for those who should live at, or after, the time when it expired. In truth, we must acknowledge ourselves to be very incompetent Judges of these Proportions. Who can pretend to say, what the extent of that preceding time may hereafter appear, when, in future and far distant Ages, it shall be compared with the numberless Succession of Christian People, still recurring to the Evidence which this Oeconomy will always afford to Their more perfect Dispensation ?

THESE Considerations do not in the least countenance, but rather effectually confute, the objection raised against this Oeconomy as consisting only of useless Rites and Ceremonies. All these were the appointment of infinite Wisdom. They were necessary to preserve that Nation from an ignorance of the true God, which had overspread the rest of the World; and were also of farther use, as being fit Preparatives to the introduction of a better Covenant. Moreover, if a Few only at first understood the superior excellence of that Covenant, and were disposed to exchange the use of a burdensome Ceremonial, for the Service of that Master, whose *yoke is easy, and his burden light*; yet the conviction of Multitudes was more easily effected, and their faith in his all gracious Dispensation more firmly established.

FROM hence too we may discover, that the Conduct of divine Providence towards the *Jews* was not, as hath been objected, the effect of a partial Fondness for a particular race of Men, that in no wise deserved it. It is evident that all this regard was shewn them, not upon their own account, but for the sake
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of the Covenant which God had made with their Fathers, and in which all Nations of the Earth were to be blessed. They were separated from the rest of the World, that through Them the *Blessings of Abraham*, and the *sure Mercies of David*, might be extended to the whole race of Mankind.

BUT as the Blessings of the Gospel have been conveyed down to us of the Gentiles by the Posterity of *Abraham*, it will become us to impart to Their Descendants the Light we have received, and to use our utmost endeavours to remove that Blindness which has *happened to them*; that so at length *all Israel* may be *saved*, and become, together with Us, *one Fold under one Shepherd*. We are encouraged to the pursuit of so desirable an end, by many *very excellent things* which are spoken of this addition to Christ's Kingdom in the Prophetic Writings. And St. Paul, in describing the consequences of that Event, hath even exceeded his usual force of expression: *If the casting away of Them be the reconciling of the World, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead.*^a

^a Rom. 11. 15.

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LASTLY, Since Christ himself has now appeared, and the shadows of the Law are long since vanished *at the brightness of his Presence*; it concerns us, above all things, not to be found unworthy of the superior Advantages we derive from his Gospel. For the present circumstances of the *Jewish Nation*, and of our own, contain in them the most powerful incitements to Obedience, that can well be imagined. When we consider that, *if some of the natural Branches be broken off, We, being a wild Olive-tree, were grafted in amongst them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the Olive-tree;*^a we can hardly avoid beholding, as the Apostle calls upon us to do, *the Goodness and Severity of God*: on them which fell, Severity; but to us, Goodness, if we continue in his goodness, *otherwise we also shall be cut off.*^b — And on the other hand, what noble Encouragements have we to aspire after the Character this infatuated People lost! For however the Kingdom of God be now enlarged, yet they only are considered as the proper Subjects of it, who, relying on the Merits of their Redeemer, endeavour to follow his Example, and obey his

^a Rom. 11. 17.

^b Ibid. 22.

Commands. Composed of these, there yet remaineth a Chosen and Peculiar People : separated from all the rest of the World, by a far more important, tho' less visible, distinction. Our blessed Lord still *knoweth who are his* ; and for this purpose gave *himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a Peculiar People, zealous of good Works.*^a

^a Tit. 2. 14.

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...mands. Compared of these, there yet re-
maineth a Christian and Pious People: I pray
that from all the rest of the World, by a far
re more potent, tho' less visible, distinction,
the blessed Lord will favour who are his
for this purpose gave himself for us, that
we might receive him from all kindred, and pur-
sue him with a Pious People, as before of
old.

— Tr. 14.

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